The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

No. 42 AUGUST 14th, 1940

DEAR MEMBER,

You were warned by Dr. Oldham that *The Christian News-Letter* would for the next three weeks appear over my name as *locum tenens* while he takes a brief midsummer holiday. The news can hardly be more unwelcome to you than the invitation was to myself. But for the sake of the work which lies ahead of him, it was obviously important that the Editor should have a vacation now; the alternative of suspending publication for three weeks seemed undesirable from several points of view; and I appeared to be the only person available, already associated with his work on the *News-Letter*, who could give the time to filling in the interval. With no previous experience in editing a weekly periodical, I can only hope at best to begin to learn how to do it by the end of the three weeks' ordeal. But the labour and thought and energy which the Editor has had to devote to his task would have been immense, even if he had started with a going concern and in normal circumstances; and when we consider the much heavier burdens involved in creating and organising such an enterprise in most difficult times, I think you will agree that some temporary substitute was called for.

" A POSITIVE SOCIAL FAITH "

I should like to begin by reverting to this phrase which was the title of a section of Letter No. 40. The Editor mentioned two remarkable leading articles in *The Times*, from one of which he quoted that " much harm has been done to our cause, both in Europe and overseas, by the insinuation that we stand for the old order, and that our only aim is to restore the *status quo* in Europe and to maintain it at home," and from the other, " the new order cannot be based on the preservation of privilege, whether the privilege of a country, of a class, or of an individual." I was reminded of these words by reading a leading article in the *Evening Standard* of August 2nd, advocating the rapid advancement of younger men, and saying: " It is a young idea which Europe needs to-day. We are not fighting to restore the old formulas to which old men cling. We are fighting for a new world which only young men can descry." And *The Times* leaders quoted have been followed by another in the same spirit, in the issue of August 5th.

Such sentiments are admirable, but we cannot afford to go on repeating them too often without anything to show for it. When phrases cease to arouse any hope of action, they go dead: and when phrases die, they can become not merely useless, but poisonous. The " new world " so eagerly desired is not to be arrived at merely by a programme to be elaborated, discussed, altered, and carried out by a committee; it is arrived at by seeing the true values in situations as they arise. The organisation of industry and of finance, of agriculture, of education, must all, under pressure of hard circumstance, be radically modified: the sum and interaction of intelligent adapta-

tions, if animated by a common spirit of patriotism, prudence and adventure, is what will create the civilisation of the future. The necessity makes the opportunity; and it is our business, as Dr. Loewe pointed out in his important Supplement (C.N.-L. No. 29), not to think of " the new world " as something to be deferred until after the war, but to conduct the war in such a way as to prepare it—for the very changes we ought to make in order to win the war can help to prepare the " new world " after it.

The number of people who aim directly at social change and improvement is no doubt small; but the number of people who are willing to accept quite radical change whenever and wherever the situation seems to call for it is now I believe very large. The adaptations which we have already had to make have made us more adaptable; the sacrifices we have made (trifling, so far, for some, cruel for others) render us more stoical for further sacrifice. We believe that the Government could call upon us to endure the most severe hardships, but only on two conditions.

The first condition is that no pretext, however unjustified, should be given to us for believing that there are powerful forces in society which would, if faced with the alternative, prefer to lose the war or to patch up a peace rather than accept social changes. What I have in view is not ordinary " defeatism "; it does not imply in the narrower sense, corruption or improbity; it comprehends a large measure of honest, dull, unimaginative assumption that things contingent are things vital. It is not the state of mind of tin-horn Catilines or that of lethargic latifundians, but of ordinary decent Christians whose Christianity has begun to putrify inside them—but it could be more dangerous than the most melodramatic Fifth Column. The other condition is that no genuine grievance of social injustice should be left unredressed, and no imaginary grievance be left unrefuted. It is not hardship that people find intolerable, but feeling that they are being treated unfairly; and a small grievance may be as dangerous as a great one. For instance, if a small tradesman suspects that while his own business is hampered by the paucity of his petrol ration, some " voluntary worker " of the value of whose work he is not convinced is getting plenty of petrol for a private car, this particular grievance can breed in him a general discontent. If this injustice is allowed, he argues unconsciously to himself, I am probably being bamboozled in other ways of which I am unaware. So distrust is born.

PAYING FOR THE WAR

I touch upon the question of the recent Supplementary Budget (which, I know, had been on the Editor's mind) not to make criticism for which I have no special qualifications, but because it represents one of those subjects upon which the ordinary thoughtful man wants to be reassured. We are all gratified to have a National Government, and to be convinced that in some departments it has brought a new initiative and enterprise; but we should like to be sure that it will bring also a truly National Finance. The new spirit in the Government shows no appearance of having reached the Treasury. That every individual and every corporation should contribute to national investment to the utmost of their ability seems obvious. But how, we want to know, is the gap between the maximum voluntary contributions, plus taxation, and essential national expenditure to be met? I have a pamphlet of the Economic Reform Club and Institute (an organisation of which I have no other knowledge: its address is 26, Grosvenor Place, London, S.W. 1) called " The Banks and the War "—a paper of correspondence with the Treasury. The Club wanted to know why the nation should pay interest (which is of course payable until the capital is repaid) to the Banks for money created to help finance the war. In this correspondence the Treasury, as might be expected, gave no change. But to me (who am no economist) this question

seems not unrelated to that raised by the Archbishop of York in our Supplement of last week, relative to the " Law of Jubilee."

THE CONDITIONS OF STATESMANSHIP

Such doubts need not, of course, start from Christian belief or lead to Christian conclusions. But I believe that what people want from their statesmen, whether they know it or not, is not merely energy, efficiency and ability, but a right sense of values; they do not want the values of a class to which they do not themselves belong, or even merely those of the class to which they do belong, but of the nation as a whole. These should not be values imposed by the power of a personality or the doctrines of a " party," but elicited by a kind of representative character; and should have reference not necessarily to what people think they want, but to what they really want and what they can recognise that they ought to want—to people not always just as they are, but as they would like to be. The late King George V came to have some of this representative character: so that the humblest individual could imagine himself almost as in the same position—but not doing the job so well. Mr. Churchill has gained something of this authority; and it is possible that a similar popularity attends the Minister who most resembles Mr. Churchill in broadcast manner and speech—Mr. Bevin. Incidentally, these men know how to speak English which is pure but not pasteurized. But I am not concerned with popularity, but with what lies behind popularity when the popularity is justified: a sense of what can appeal to the best in every Briton, by making him see himself as a member of a great community. So far as Lord Halifax's broadcast failed to receive the assent which it deserved, I believe that it was because the non-church-goer, and the infrequent church-goer, thought of it as directed to somebody else—to " the man in the pew." But on the other hand, I do not believe that any statesman to-day in this country could command popular success, whose mind and feelings were wholly detached from that obscure basis of Christian thought and emotion which is still integral with the people's ideals.

PORTUGAL

In recent weeks there have been frequent references in the Press to Portugal, first in connection with the Colonial Exhibition held in Lisbon to celebrate the anniversary of the nation's independence, and second in connection with our own Mediterranean problems. Much of this matter has been repetitive, but at least, the name and eminence of Dr. Salazar, the Prime Minister for the last twelve years, is not well known to the British public. Dr. Salazar—whose chief, as President, is General Carmona—has never encouraged the adoption of the " Leader Principle," and no leader has ever won his position with less personal ambition, or less appeal to mass emotion. Nor did he rise to power through a " party." He simply happens to be the ablest statesman in Portugal, all the more distinguished by never appearing in a uniform or wearing a decoration. He looks what he is by profession, a university professor: but a very brief meeting with him gave me the impression of a university professor who is also an extremely acute judge of men. His interest and importance for us is that without being in any dubious political sense pro-clerical he is a Christian at the head of a Christian country.

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

I was glad to read a week or two ago in *The Listener* a paragraph about the successful evacuation of Alderney; and a most interesting account from an eye-witness, giving a much more sombre account of the last days in Jersey, occupies a large place in a recent issue of the *King-Hall News-Letter*. For, though we now have no news from

the Channel Islands, the very absence of news should make us think more constantly of those, English and Anglo-Norman, who remain under the German power which is now exercised over British soil, the oldest fief of the Crown. The Bishop of Winchester at his Diocesan Conference reported that practically all the clergy remained with their people; and the following is a quotation from one of our members, the son of a minister who stayed in Jersey:

"When it became clear that more than half of the population could not get away from the Island, the Bailiff and all the Jurats put out a public notice to the effect that they were all remaining to stand by the people, and all the Free Church ministers sent a similar statement to the Press. Evacuation by air continued after the staff of the airport had left, and a Methodist minister took charge of the office, and organised the despatch of the planes. We are all proud that our parents remained to carry on their work."

The people of the Islands ought to be constantly remembered in our prayers, and periodically at public worship in every church in the Empire.

THE C.N.-L. AND H.M. FORCES

We have now received nearly £200 in excess of the £500 for which we appealed to cover the cost of extra postage. Our most grateful thanks are due to all who have so kindly helped us.

We should like the *News-Letter* to be more widely known to the men and women in the three Services, and opportunities have presented themselves of supplying copies to a number of centres in ways that would secure their receiving attention and being read. We propose to use the surplus of the fund to which you generously contributed as the nucleus of a fund for this purpose. We believe that you will welcome this use of your donations. Some of you may wish personally to assist a project, the possibilities of which extend far beyond our present resources.

POSTSCRIPT

If I disturbed the Editor's holdiay by consulting him about my subject-matter and my opinions, there would be no point in my replacing him for these three weeks. He will know nothing of these three issues until they appear. If, therefore, you have any complaints or criticisms, I hope that you will address them to me personally, so that I may benefit from them, and so that you may keep in mind that it is not the Editor to whom these criticisms should be directed.

Yours sincerely,

T. S. Eliot

Subscriptions.—The rate of subscriptions to the News-Letter is 12s. 6d. ($3.0 in U.S.A. and Canada) for one year, and 6s. 6d. ($1.50 in U.S.A. and Canada) for six months, and 3s. 6d. for three months.

All communications and subscriptions should be sent to—

THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER, 20, BALCOMBE STREET, DORSET SQUARE, LONDON, N.W.1.

Published by Dr. J. H. Oldham for the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life and printed by St. Clements Press, Ltd., Portugal Street, London, W.C.2.